



DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER
Secretariat for Administration

February 1, 2013

The Honorable Andrew White
House Labor, Industrial and Rehabilitative Services Committee
107 North Main Street – Room 307
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

Re: HB 323 (Prohibiting Collective Bargaining Agreements that Require Employees to Join a Labor Union)

Dear Representative White and Members of the House Labor, Industrial and Rehabilitative Services Committee:

As the Director of the Office of Public Policy of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Manchester, and on behalf of Bishop Peter Libasci, I write to express our opposition to HB 323, a so-called “Right-to-Work” bill.

Since the late 19th century, the Roman Catholic Church has supported the right of workers to band together in free trade unions for the purpose of bargaining with employers. Over the years, our free collective bargaining system has worked well to obtain fair wages and working conditions for workers, to promote creative collaboration between workers and management, and to balance within society the interests of labor and capital.

Because collective bargaining has worked so well, any proposal to alter the current system requires careful scrutiny. Proposals that offer genuine reform deserve support, but proposals that radically change existing arrangements without offering any benefit to either workers or management should not be supported. In light of this, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Manchester opposes so-called right-to-work laws. Three reasons undergird our position.

First, “right-to-work” laws are unnecessary. Supporters of “right-to-work” laws have argued that some workers have conscientious objections about political positions adopted by their unions, but federal law already protects workers who do not want to join a union as a condition of employment or from paying for union activities that violate their personal beliefs.

Second, “right-to-work” laws unnecessarily restrict the freedom of unions and employers to bargain over substantive issues, specifically union security arrangements. Labor and management should be permitted to reach agreements about a wide range of issues. The “union shop” is just one possible outcome of negotiations. Unions and employers are free to agree to other arrangements. The state should protect this freedom rather than arbitrarily ban an outcome acceptable in every other New England state.



Third, “right-to-work” laws seriously undermine the sense of collective good. Our nation is devoted to protecting individual freedom as well as fostering the unity of all people. Much of what we receive, such as national defense and education, is produced and received collectively. A person need not support every policy and priority of our national or state government in order to pay taxes. Likewise, all workers, regardless of their opinions, benefit from significant collective goods won by their unions. It is reasonable to expect them to share in the cost. The needs of the individual and the community always must be kept in balance. “Right-to-work” laws skew the balance toward the individual and devalue the good of the broader community.

Catholic social teaching supports the right of workers to choose whether to organize, join a union, and bargain collectively. Workers, owners, employers, and unions should work together in this time of economic difficulty to create decent jobs, build a more just economy, and advance the common good. The passage of a “right-to-work” law will not help New Hampshire accomplish any of these goals.

For the foregoing reasons, we urge you to vote against passage of HB 323. Thank you for your service to the people of the State of New Hampshire.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Meredith P. Cook".

Meredith P. Cook, Esq.
Director, Office of Public Policy

MPC/kjl